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COMMEMORATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

1. This note contains a number of suggestions that will be submitted for consultations, on the basis of which a supplementary oral report will be made to the fifty-first session. It reviews the major orientations that will or may mark the future of the Economic Commission for Europe, the elements of the assessment and the organization of the fifty-second session itself.

THE MAJOR ORIENTATIONS

2. The most important element will clearly be the adoption by the Member States of the "Declaration on strengthening of economic cooperation in Europe", as decided at the fiftieth session (decision A (50)). Preparation of this Declaration is well under way as a result of decision 1 (1995-S) to establish an ad hoc working group to define strategic directions of future activities of the Commission and the sending of questionnaires to the bureaux of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies and to the Member States of the Commission.

3. Recognizing the numerous and varied relations that exist between the Commission and the private sector, and with a view to structuring those relations better and enhancing their efficiency, the fiftieth anniversary could provide an opportunity to establish more systematic and transparent relations with the world of business. An informal document setting out the overall activities of the ECE that involve representatives of businesses has been prepared and could provide a basis for an examination of the topic. In addition, the Round Table Conference on cooperation and sustainable industrial development, which is due to be held during the fiftieth session, could provide valuable input.

4. The secretariat is progressively exploring and making use of the considerable resources made available by interconnection of computer networks. Decisive progress was made in 1995 and even greater progress is expected in 1996. The progress made allows for work of better quality and greater effectiveness. It also enables decisive changes to be made in the dissemination of the work of the Commission and all its subsidiary bodies. The number of potential users of its analyses, conventions and standards with direct access to its basic texts will be greatly increased. The progress also allows for greater interaction between producers and clients. The fiftieth anniversary could provide an opportunity formally to launch new communication procedures between the secretariat, Governments and businesses or universities that make use of the Commission's work.

THE EVALUATION

5. In conformity with decision E (49), which included paragraphs 5-8 of note E/ECE/1289 in the programme of work of the ECE, the secretariat will prepare a publication to reflect the main contributions of the Commission to the well-being of the peoples and Governments of the region. This publication could be prepared by young people serving as interns and students and by retired ECE staff. Former members of the secretariat or participants in ECE meetings who have played a significant role would be invited in person to contribute an article. A competition would be held for interns and students and a jury would select the most outstanding contributions. The prizewinners could be invited to attend the fifty-second session. Although the publication would be devoted to the evaluation, each contributor would be asked to describe possible future developments in the area dealt with by him or her.

6. The competition might be the starting-point for an annual competition for the best paper on a subject of interest to Europe, which would be chosen each year by the Commission.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FIFTY-SECOND SESSION

7. It is suggested that the overall activities connected with the fiftieth anniversary should culminate at the fifty-second session, which should be a particularly solemn occasion. Governments could consider the following proposals:

The session would be limited to one week, divided into two parts. The first two days would be at a high level and would focus on prospects for the Commission and the countries of the region. The remainder of the week would be devoted to regular business. The first day could be set aside for consideration of the economic prospects of countries and of the region and of the cooperation to be developed in order to ensure harmonious relations. The morning of the second day would be set aside for statements on the role of the Commission and would conclude with the formal adoption of the "Declaration on strengthening of economic cooperation in Europe". The round table on the Commission's achievements and prospects would be held in the afternoon and would conclude with the award of the prize to the students or interns who had written the best articles on the ECE.

Commitment on the part of countries to the ECE's future should be demonstrated by high-level participation, particularly on the first two days. The presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the appropriate ministers of Member States on the morning of the second day is highly desirable. Invitations would also be sent to the Presidents, Secretaries-General or Directors of the organizations and institutions with which the Commission cooperates in Europe. They could be invited to participate in the first day's debate on economic prospects and cooperation in Europe and in the adoption of the Declaration on the second day.

Experience has shown that the level of participation at a meeting is higher, and its impact greater, if it is held away from headquarters. It would be desirable to consider this possibility without delay and to set the dates for the fifty-second session accordingly, on the understanding that it would be preferable for it to be held in April or possibly May.

OTHER EVENTS

8. The secretariat has already requested the United Nations Postal Administration to prepare the issue of a commemorative stamp. The first day of issue could be the day on which the "Declaration on strengthening of economic cooperation in Europe" is adopted.

9. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations an exhibition was organized showing the contribution made by the ECE to the daily life of the population and enterprises in Europe. The exhibition could be broadened so as to include information on the impact of the activities of the ECE on non-member countries. It could subsequently be used, in connection with seminars or conferences within or outside the United Nations, as a means of making the ECE better known.

10. The Commission might wish to invite the Executive Secretary to examine with Governments the possibility of offering a work of art to the United Nations in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the ECE, as well as the possibility of special contributions that could be used to finance a number of activities connected with the jubilee, such as the exhibition, the holding of the competition for students and interns referred to above and the prize for the fiftieth anniversary prizewinners, or to reward the best paper if the above proposal were to be adopted.